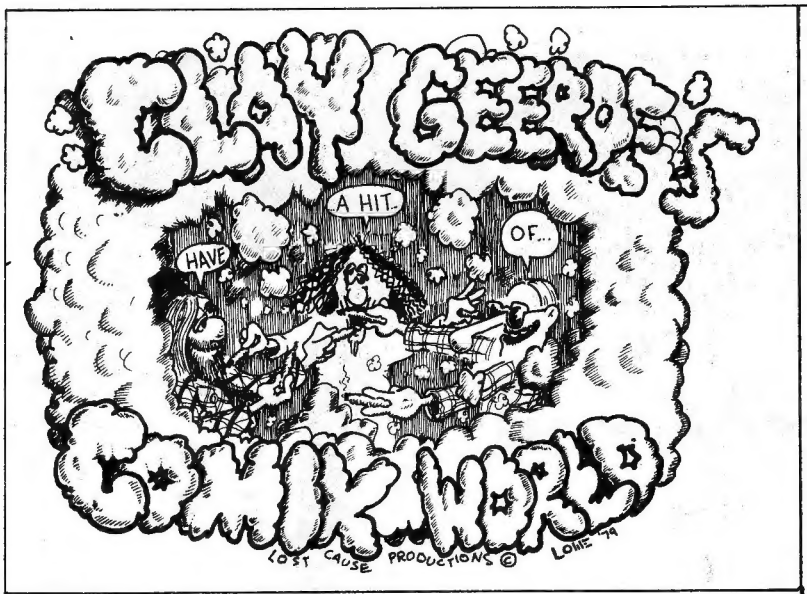
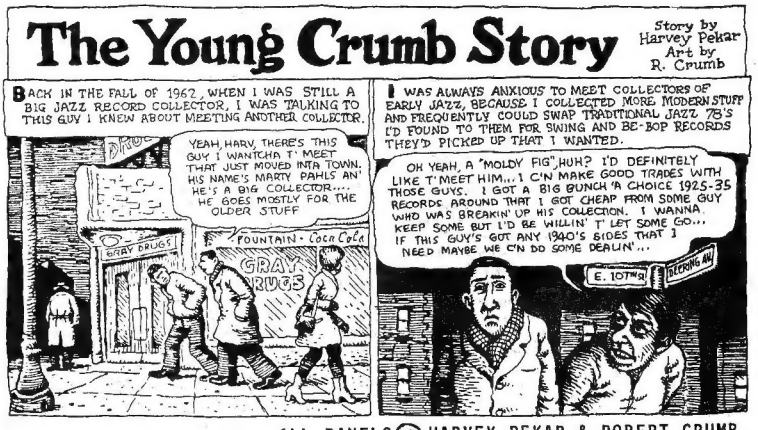


COMIX WORLD 134. November 5, 1979. © Clay Geerdes. Box 7081, Berkeley, CA 94707. World Rights Reserved. Subs: $6 for 24, $10 for 48. Complete set of back issues (some xeroxed) for $25 pp). Logo by Tim Lowe. Well, I promised to tell you the story of the Iowa cartoonists who created Lost Cause Productions, then I lost Arnie Willis's letter, but I've found it so here are Willis's words with only token editing for space. "Lost Cause Productions took its name from the surrounding cultural void back in 1975. What better place to start than Des Moines, Iowa, right? Too bad ... We started our comix publishing biz in Iowa City. Animation was the real reason Lost Cause Productions got it all together. Tim Lowe and myself had been scribblin' out local color comics all through high school with several others. Two years after, we decided to try animation. Our first 30 second cartoon was produced in black and white, featuring "Wart Wankle" and it was drawn up in 1975 on tracing paper cells. After that, we worked on acetate cells and used cell vinyl paints. Realizing the intensity of the work involved in animation and being basically lazy, we switched to drawing stories in hopes of publishing ourselves. Tim Lowe had developed the characters of "Flip, Dip & Drip" years earlier, based on two mutual friends and himself. I could readily identify with these so we jammed out "On the Road again," the last story in LOST CAUSE 2. We drew the early works frame by frame. I drew a frame, he drew one or two, then back to me, etc. This way the stories evolved into real strange tales. All our "Flip, Dip, & Drip" stories are based upon real events we experienced, however remote. LOST CAUSE 3 has the conclusion to "Home Sweet Home" as the lead story. It's based upon our early LOST CAUSE COMIX 1 years when we lived in a trailer with 21 cats and a fascist landlord . . .hence, our response to oppression! Tim and I split from the trailer in 1977. I moved to Des Moines & set up Lost Cause Productions, Studio West. Studio East remained in Iowa City. We had to change our style since the distance barrier was there and we began to draw page by page. I'm heavily read in fantasy so I produced TALES OF LOST TIMES 1. Tim's not too interested in Sci/fi. I met Chuck Phillips who was interested and he's now working with LOST CAUSE. We plan to do more of both types of comic as the future becomes the present. Our long term project is a feature-length "Flip, Dip, and Drip" cartoon." Arnold Willis and Tim Lowe were born the same day, May 6, in 1955. They attended Iowa State University. $5 to Lost Cause, P.O. Box 2634, Des Moines, IA 50315 ought to get you all their comix.

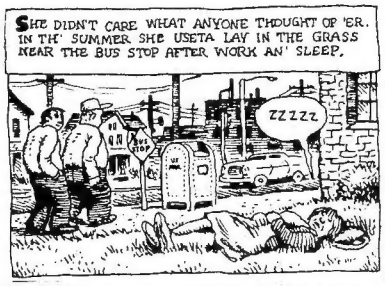

The Young Crumb Story
Story by Harvey Pekar
Art by R. Crumb
BACK IN THE FALL OF 1962, WHEN I WAS STILL A BIG JAZZ RECORD COLLECTOR, I WAS TALKING TO THIS GUY I KNEW ABOUT MEETING ANOTHER COLLECTOR.
YEAH, HARV, THERE'S THIS GUY I WANTCHA T' MEET THAT JUST MOVED INTA TOWN. HIS NAME'S MARTY PAHLS AN' HE'S A BIG COLLECTOR.... HE GOES MOSTLY FOR THE OLDER STUFF
GRAY DRUGS
FOUNTAIN · Coca Cola
I WAS ALWAYS ANXIOUS TO MEET COLLECTORS OF EARLY JAZZ, BECAUSE I COLLECTED MORE MODERN STUFF AND FREQUENTLY COULD SWAP TRADITIONAL JAZZ 78'S I'D FOUND TO THEM FOR SWING AND BE-BOP RECORDS THEY'D PICKED UP THAT I WANTED.
OH YEAH, A "MOLDY FIG", HUH? I'D DEFINITELY LIKE T' MEET HIM... I C'N MAKE GOOD TRADES WITH THOSE GUYS. I GOT A BIG BUNCH 'A CHOICE 1925-35 RECORDS AROUND THAT I GOT CHEAP FROM SOME GUY WHO WAS BREAKIN' UP HIS COLLECTION. I WANNA KEEP SOME BUT I'D BE WILLIN' T' LET SOME GO... IF THIS GUY'S GOT ANY 1940'S SIDES THAT I NEED MAYBE WE C'N DO SOME DEALIN'...
E. 10TH
LISTENING AN'

ALL PANELS © HARVEY PEKAR & ROBERT CRUMB.

AMERICAN SPLENDOR 4
Harvey Pekar
Box 18471
Cleveland Hts, Ohio
44118

HE STAYED AROUND CLEVELAND FOR AWHILE BUT IN JANUARY OF 1967 TOOK OFF FOR SAN FRANCISCO WHERE HE STARTED TO MAKE A NAME FOR HIMSELF AS ONE OF THE NEW "UNDERGROUND" CARTOONISTS. I TOOK A TRIP OUT TO SAN FRANCISCO IN 1968 WITH MY WIFE AND VISITED HIM AT HIS APARTMENT IN THE HAIGHT-ASHBURY DISTRICT.
YEAH MAN, WE BEEN HEARIN' ABOUT YA... 'S NICE YER DOIN' GOOD...
SSSSUCK

With a handful of exceptions, the writing in underground comix has seldom measured up to the artwork. This may have to do with the anti-intellectual psychedelic beginnings of the medium, but it also has to do with an artistic attitude, one that sets the art above the writing and leads to idolized artists and ignored writers. This is the same in overgrounds as it is in ugs, indeed this negation of the writer is prevalent throughout the entertainment industry. Most of my readers are going to buy the latest issue of AMERICAN SPLENDOR because Robert Crumb did the cover and several of the short stories in it and they collect the artwork of Crumb. But it is not Crumb that makes this book what it is; it's the sensitive writing of Harvey Pekar, a man who has a sharp ear for dialogue and a compassionate view of the ordinary people who live out their moments in his stories. Like Crumb, Pekar is totally honest about his own role in the lives of the others, admitting his failures and showing his readers that life is quite different from the fraudulent bullshit dumped on the public by television. In AS 4, Pekar tells about his first meeting with Robert Crumb, about their mutual passion for 78 records, and about Crumb's early work for American Greetings. All during this time, Pekar was writing, certain that he could write adult stories for the undergrounds, stories about real people and the way they worked to get ahead in their lives, their successes and failures. He knew the medium was open to more than a lot of silly dope humor and hippie street patter. He showed Crumb and Robert Armstrong some of his writing and they wound up illustrating it and he was on his way to what ultimately became AMERICAN SPLENDOR. To be sure, this is a regional underground, yet it is no less valid for all that. The story of the young writer, Herschel (illustrated by Gerry Shamray), could have taken place anywhere. The locale is not as important as the feelings evoked. Herschel is a file clerk during his everyday life, but he's also a researcher and a writer who gets published every once in awhile. As a writer, I identified strongly with Herschel and his alienated feeling. He learns that he can write what he wants as long as he expresses the philosophy of the magazines he submits his work to. He also learns that a majority of the big mags want names rather than quality writing. He also learns that being a writer doesn't give him much status with other people. It "doesn't mean anything to them; they don't read." Well, Herschel has his problems from a safe distance; He would be even more disturbed if he had to see what happens around magazines up close. I ran into several writer friends at this year's Coyote ball at Civic Auditorium in San Francisco and we talked about how crooked most of the mags were, ripping off ideas from query letters, running a piece and not paying for it until months later if at all. . AMERICAN SPLENDOR is realism in contrast to fantasy, and while there is a nostalgic aspect to it, there is also a lot of good sociology and contemporary history, like Sid's analysis of the auto industry in Detroit (illustrated by Gary Dumm). Sid tells about the 90 day wonders, guys who get hired, only to be laid off before they get their 90 days in and have to be retained as regulars. The book is balanced by some humorous short pieces illustrated by Crumb and Michael T. Gilbert (who is now living in Texas). AMERICAN SPLENDOR 4 gets my vote as one of the finest ugs of all decade. It's $2.40 pp from Pekar in Ohio.**



ADULTS ONLY 1 is out, a hard one. C. G.

ALTHOUGH HE SETTLED IN CALIFORNIA, CRUMB USED TO LIKE TO TAKE THESE CROSS-COUNTRY TRIPS. WHEN HE STOPPED IN CLEVELAND IN 1970 AND 1971 HE STAYED WITH ME AND MY WIFE.
HIYA HARVEY.
HIYA, MAN... GLAD YOU C'D MAKE IT!

A try to save an image of the '60s

By Jim Wood
Examiner Staff Writer

The strange creatures pouring from the giant seashell once decorated the wall of the Good Times commune on a cul de sac where Castro Street slides into Market.

The 12-by-17-foot wall was one side of the dining hall where 25 people gathered every night. Their mission was a strange one for the counter-culture, publishing a newspaper that exhausted their minds and tried their souls. Finally, in 1972, they gave up, figuratively killing their child while it still was healthy.

Now debris fills the room. Dust and plaster mix on the floor near the caretaker's bedroll, and scaffolding and boards are everywhere as workmen put their measuring tapes to the wall as if preparing a coffin.

Only the mural gives the house life, and soon the mural too may be destroyed.

The great green stucco at 2425 Market St. is to be replaced by 12 condominiums, a profitable use for the property whose driveway leads to no street.

It would be easy to misunderstand what is happening there at Castro and Market, to turn the possible destruction of the mural into an old-fashioned, 1960s fight between a landlord and an artist. It really isn't that way. The landlord, Don Gordon, is doing all he can to cooperate in saving the mural. The artist, Guy Colwell, whose works have hung in Paris, London, Amsterdam and New York, is not bitter against Gordon.

But Colwell would like to save the mural, his only wall painting in San Francisco, and a remnant of the days when San Francisco was the capital of a counter-culture that seems lost now.

"If this picture cannot be saved, it will be remembered and missed by many," Colwell says.

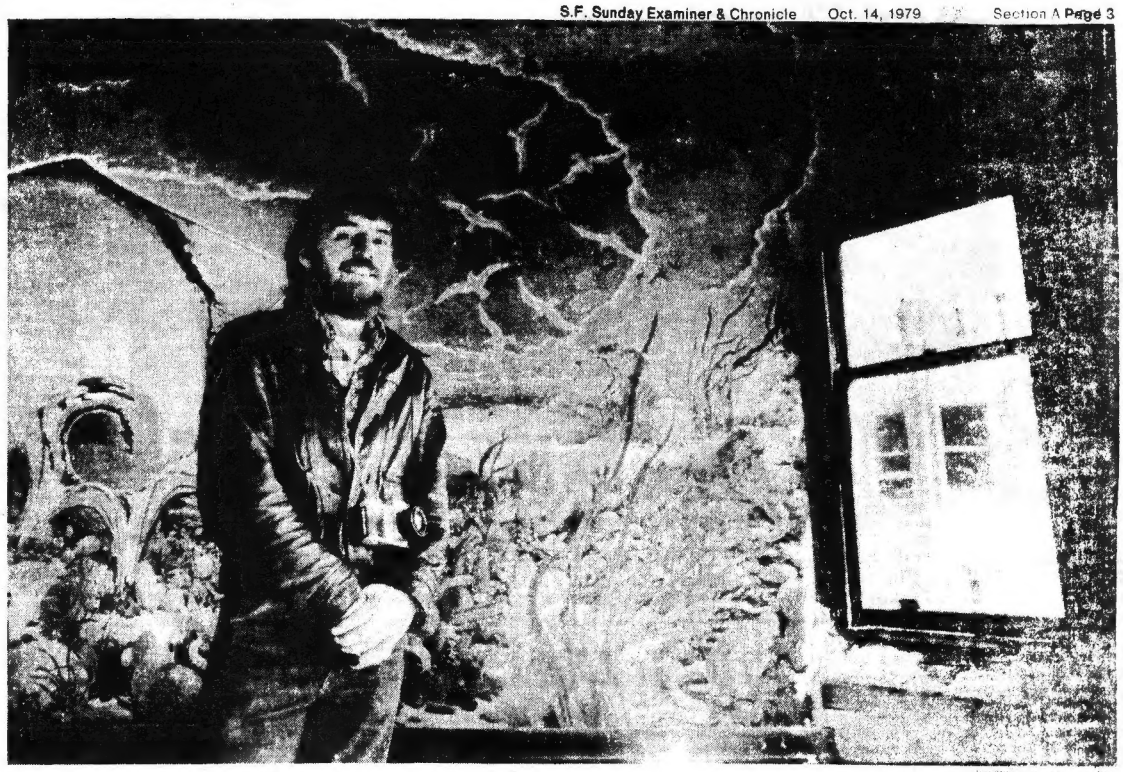
The problem is not a new one to San Francisco. Some of the country's most vibrant art is being splashed across walls in the Mission, North Beach, almost anywhere that artists can find large flat spaces big enough to hold their ideas. Murals also are appearing along main streets in Berkeley and North Oakland and at scattered sites in Marin.

The difficulty is that, unlike paintings, the murals are not a movable feast. Traditionally they were painted on public walls or in the interiors of churches, sites not likely to fall under the constant ebb and flow of urban development.

But with murals being painted on everything from hardware stores to hotels (one Berkeley mural near the College Avenue Safeway was defaced by an activist-critic who sprayed "postcard garbage" across an outdoor scene), the potential for destruction is constant.

Saving a mural can be complicated, according to Martin Snipper, director of the San Francisco Art Commission.

Part of the problem is size. Snipper says that to rescue a mural, an artist must first find a place to move the mural to, not an easy chore given the space shortage of most museums.



Artist Guy Colwell, shown here in front of the mural he painted for the Good Times commune's dining hall, would like to save his work — but how?

Cost too can have an odd spin, Snipper points out. Say the mural can be moved for $20,000, a conservative estimate. Snipper says that many artists might be more interested in painting the mural again for the $20,000, rather than have the money go to a mover.

"Many famous artists, like Rubens, did their paintings twice," he says.

In Colwell's case, the mural was copied from a carefully worked out drawing, then transferred to the wall using a precise grid system. The fact that the painting was directly on the wall rather than on canvas makes the possible saving of the mural more expensive. It must be backed, and the front may also need to be taped in place before the entire wall is moved.

Using this system, museums have moved entire walls from ancient Spanish chapels, but the expense seems to indicate that for a living and so far little-recognized artist like Colwell, there is slight chance that the mural will be rescued.

If it is not, San Francisco will lose not only a valuable piece of original art, but a bit of its history as the seat of the counter-culture. Back in 1972, when the Good Times commune was flourishing, its newspaper published its own obituary:

"Good Times is not dead. It's deep frozen, or into spinning a cocoon so as to be able to metamorphose into something else," the paper wrote.

"Unless we (in the collective) disperse, not having the binding force of a production schedule, we will continue to generate some kind of mind and spirit nourishment."

Colwell's mural may be the last of that unmovable feast.

COMIC REFS-- Mario Puzo has a girl in FOOLS DIE named Charlie Brown because she looks like Schulz' eternal five-year-old.* David Noon sends word on these new comix from Britain: MAGIC VOICE,CHEESECAKE 1 SHOK THERAPY 0, 1, FAMILY ALBUM, THE BOP THAT JUST WON'T STOP, and LOVE, DEATH AND BOOMPS-A-DAISY. *Two of Irving Klaw's BIZARRE KATALOGS (collections of ads & photos/bondage stuff) have been published by Belier Press, P. O. Box "C", Gracie, STA, NY 10028. $9 each. Inquire about the Bizarre t-shirts.* MIGHTY SPAZZY address: 316 2nd St Huntington Beach, CA 92648. $1 pp for the mini-book.

BABYFAT! There are now eight issues. You regulars can have all eight for $3 pp if you order this mon. Collectors interested in complete sets (all the various colors) should write me for a deal. I still need some artwork for the mini-comix. If you've got the time to draw a panel, let me know.* BLACK TOAD 1 is Garry Hardman's mini-comic. 25¢ and a stamp. RD #2, Sherrod Hill Rd, Edinboro, PA 16412. C.G.

Wrecked Writer

Surviving the endless emotional fears and ever-present mean fees as an obsessed, world-traveling, freelance journalist for over 30 years is hard enough and now a horrible personal tragedy has befallen John Wilcock. He's lucky to be alive.

While Wilcock was driving through Greece, gathering information for one of his $5-a-day-travel books, his small car was hit head-on by a large truck. It took over an hour for help to reach him. While he was still trapped in the car, all his money was stolen. John's legs were mangled, hips broken, and he suffered severe internal damage.

Following the wreck, which took place June 27, he spent eight weeks in an Athens Hospital and was then transferred to the Royal National Orthopedic Hospital in Stanmore, England. That's where Wilcock is still confined and will be for some time while receiving all kinds of physical therapy. He must learn to walk again. His right hand remains crushed.

John's many friends (and even enemies), have rallied to help out financially. This Tuesday, October 23, they're staging a benefit at the Village Gate. Starting at 8 p.m., the fund raiser, at $10 minimum donation, will be a combination party, concert, and auction. Here's just a partial list of the kinds of items that can be bid for: The Andy Warhol sketch that is being reproduced on the tickets; *Screw* number one, signed by Al Goldstein; a Les Levine art work; the original "Fuck Communism" poster, donated by Paul Krassner; a private screening for two people of an early cut of Woody Allen's next movie, as yet untitled; a free pie-throw at whomever you choose, from Aaron Kaye; two signed and numbered Roy Lichtenstein posters; and garbologist A.J. Weberman has put on the block a big bag of John Mitchell's trash, including the envelope the Watergate subpoena arrived in. For additional information about the benefit call 674-1442.

Although British by birth, Wilcock spent many years working in America which explains, for those who aren't already familiar with his name, this effort on his behalf in New York. During the first 10 years of this newspaper's life, John wrote a weekly column called The Village Square. His articles also appeared in most major magazines and, because of his early involvement with a bevy of such publications as the *East Village Other*, he became quite notorious as the crypto-sage of the underground press. ■